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SUBJECT: TURKEY: VIEWS ON UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAM

REF: STATE 76373

1. Summary. Econoffs met with UNICEF representatives from both the National Committee and Country Offices to evaluate Turkey UNICEF,s program content and effectiveness per request in reftel. UNICEF,s activities in Turkey focus on maternal and child health; early childhood development and child-friendly learning environments; child protection; and policy, social mobilization and emergency preparedness. UNICEF has a positive and cooperative relationship with relevant government agencies in Turkey and has been effective, particularly, in bridging the gender gap in primary education. End Summary.

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Priorities in Turkey  
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2. There are five key areas in which UNICEF focuses its resources globally: 1) girl,s education, 2) early childhood development, 3) immunization, 4) fighting HIV/AIDS and 5) protecting children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. The UNICEF Turkey Country Office is currently in the last year of its most recent five-year planning cycle. It is now developing a new five-year country program for 2006-2010. Over the next five years, UNICEF will continue to focus on the five priority areas and place a special emphasis on child protection.

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Education  
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3. UNICEF,s main goal in this field is to ensure access to education and gender parity for girls. Main obstacles to girl,s education in Turkey include a social priority accorded to boys over girls, long distances to schools, limited access to schools and classroom space, limited funds for families to send their children to school, and a need for girls to be a source of additional income for families. In addition to UNICEF, the World Bank has identified increasing girls' enrollment rates as a priority in its programming. UNICEF,s Girl,s Education Campaign reduced the number of out-of-school girls by 15% during 2003 and 2004. It also resulted in a significant increase in boys, enrollment.

4. UNICEF also wants to ensure access at the preschool level. Turkey currently has a low 15% attendance rate and most of this attendance is in urban areas only. Preschools are not widely available in rural areas. UNICEF,s target is to raise the attendance rate in urban areas by 15%. In rural areas, UNICEF hope,s to help develop a community-based preschool system.

5. UNICEF plans to work with the GOT to assess the quality of education in Turkey. UNICEF, along with officials from the Ministry of Education (MOE), is working to ensure that &Child-Friendly criteria will be adopted in approximately 30,000 schools by 2010. Currently, there are 250 Child-Friendly schools throughout the country. Each has a minimum standard which helps ensure the development of a child,s faculties of critical thinking, self-esteem, and social skills. Under the joint UNICEF/MOE program, UNICEF will assess everything from school response systems and safety to parental involvement.

6. As part of the U.N. Secretary General,s request for a &Global Study on Violence Against Children,8 UNICEF will work with the MOE on a study looking at violence in schools\*particularly bullying. UNICEF and the MOE will select a team of national researchers who will look at how teachers and parents address the issue of bullying and the team will endeavor to come up with effective solutions. UNICEF official told Econoff that though there have been some studies on this issue in Turkey, the studies have never been nationally representative.

7. UNICEF is also going to develop &catch-up education curriculum for working children and children who have never attended school. The curriculum will be specifically tailored for the educational needs of children who may not

have had any formal schooling but who have developed mathematical or reading skills in the workforce or at home.

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Health  
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18. In the area of health, UNICEF supports the Ministry of Health (MOH) to ensure that babies throughout Turkey have the best start in life.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF helps the MOH establish Mother Support Systems and Baby-Friendly Hospitals which encourage mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies for at least six months. There are currently 322 baby-friendly hospitals throughout Turkey.

19. UNICEF also supports the Ministries of Health and Agriculture to encourage consumption of iodized salt to address iodine deficiency disorders. UNICEF works with relevant ministries on immunization campaigns and hopes to eliminate measles from Turkey by 2010.

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Protection of Children and Adolescents  
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10. UNICEF will continue its work in education and health throughout its 2006-2010 country program. However, it plans to place a special focus on child protection. With funding from the European Union (EU), UNICEF will continue to work with the Ministry of Justice (Laws Department, Prisons and Reformatories, International Law and Foreign Affairs, and the Education Department), the Ministry of Justice, the Gendarme, and their key partner, Social Services and Child Protection Services, to strengthen the systems that protect children. UNICEF officials told Econoff that some improvements have already been made in the Turkish Penal Code in the area of preventing and addressing the abuse and exploitation of children.

11. UNICEF also plans to develop a program to help prevent the increase, in recent years, of children living and working on the streets in Turkey. UNICEF believes a program which builds the capacity of parents to care for their children and reinforcing positive child-rearing is the best protection for keeping kids off the streets. In addition, UNICEF will improve monitoring and reporting of abuses committed against children and help develop short and long term solutions.

12. With 20,000 children living outside of parental care in institutions, UNICEF believes the establishment of an ombudsman for children is vital. This would ensure that children have an advocate of their own to turn to if their rights are violated.

13. For adolescents, UNICEF is working with a team of adolescents to develop a life skills package<sup>8</sup> for 13 million of their out-of-school peers. The life skills based education will touch upon everything from HIV/AIDS prevention to gender equity\*giving these adolescents the basic life skills and the knowledge to live healthy and productive lives. The material will be delivered peer-to-peer by the teams of adolescents with whom UNICEF is working.

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Advocacy and Social Policy  
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14. In the past, UNICEF has worked with the GOT at the national and provincial levels. In the future, UNICEF also plans to work with municipalities and help build Child-Friendly Cities.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF hopes to monitor the enforcement of policy reforms in cities and assess cities, data management of resources that are targeted for children. Ultimately, UNICEF would like to see the localization of international standards for children. The Ministry of Interior is UNICEF's key partner in this endeavor to encourage proper municipal budget allocation to improve the quality of life for children.

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UNICEF Success  
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15. UNICEF has made great strides in education. Over 100,000 girls have enrolled or re-enrolled in school and UNICEF is helping to close the gender gap in primary education. Though UNICEF recognizes that it has been a concerted effort at many levels, UNICEF believes it has been a contributor to the reduction in child and infant mortality rates in Turkey. According to UNICEF, the GOT has shown political commitment and high level support for the issues UNICEF champions and the recently formed GOT Parliamentary Commission on Children is an example of the government's commitment.

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Funding

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¶16. UNICEF Turkey receives \$1 million per year from UNICEF headquarters. The Turkish National Committee for UNICEF raises an additional \$0.5 million mostly through sales of UNICEF products and from corporate sponsorships. Some funds also come from individual and pledge donations. However, National Committee officials told Econoffs that Turkish people are sometimes wary that by donating to an international organization, their donations will go abroad rather than helping children in Turkey. National Committee fund-raisers can, however, earmark donations at the donor's request.

¶17. In the past, most of Turkey UNICEF's spending has been in girls, education. However, the EU is a major funder for UNICEF and as a result of Turkey's acquis with the EU, more funding will be focused on child protection in the 2006-2010 term. Other major funders for UNICEF in Turkey are the World Bank and the U.S.

#### Country Coordination

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¶18. Though Post is not directly involved in any programming activities with UNICEF, UNICEF does attend a Project Coordination group composed of representatives from donor organizations in Turkey. The group includes Embassies, international organizations and private institutions. The aim of the coordination group is to have a forum for discussion of each group's programming activities to eliminate repetition or to determine if joint cooperation is feasible between donor organizations. UNICEF attends these meetings (which Post also attends) and shares information on its projects and plans.

¶19. The UN, under the leadership of the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, has initiated a process of cohesive planning among UN agencies and their government counterparts in an effort to have better coordination and strategic planning. Through this process, UNICEF coordinates with the GOT and develops a common country assessment of Turkey's needs in improving the lives of children. The GOT State Planning Organization reviews and approves the final country assessment.

#### ----- Comment -----

¶20. In the past 54 years of cooperation with Turkey, UNICEF has developed a reputation as a respected organization which does good work in improving the lives of children in Turkey and throughout the world. An example of its ability to mobilize support in Turkey is the recent success of UNICEF's efforts to raise one million dollars from the Turkish public for the Tsunami relief effort in Indonesia. UNICEF's coordination with relevant government agencies to produce positive results in areas such as girl's education is an example of UNICEF's continued effectiveness in country-appropriate programs in Turkey. End Comment.  
EDELMAN